

## **Human Fatalities Associated with Animals in the United States (1991 – 2001)**

Excluding motor vehicle (200/year deer-vehicle collisions) or animal-ridden events (88/year) and zoonotic infections, animals caused a yearly average of 177 fatalities in the United States from 1991 to 2001. (6.57 fatalities per 10 million population). A large percentage of these deaths are associated with venomous animals – bees, wasps, and other venomous insects.

Encounters with animals cause hundreds of fatalities, millions of nonfatal injuries, and cost hundreds of millions of dollars annually in the United States.<sup>4</sup> In addition to inflicting traumatic injuries, animals transmit numerous zoonotic infections. Thousands of cases of Lyme disease and West Nile virus occur in the United States yearly and are responsible for many fatalities and cases of chronic illness.<sup>6</sup> Zoonotic infections are responsible for hundreds of fatalities each year in the United States.

Children younger than 10 years and adults ages 65 and older appear to be at increased risk of death from dog attacks. ***In 2001, an estimated 368,256 persons were treated for dog bite injuries.***<sup>3</sup> The injury rate was highest for children ages 5 to 9 years.

By region of the United States, the South has the largest percentage of animal-related fatalities. Part of this may be because of warmer weather increasing insect populations in the South and colder weather limiting the spread of venomous animals, such as fire ants, to higher latitudes. Alligators and several species of venomous snakes are more likely to be found in the South. Warmer temperatures in the South may also increase the likelihood that children will more likely play outdoors year round, thus increasing their chance of exposure to animals.

As previously noted, other animal-related fatalities are not included in this study. Up to 200 fatalities per year may result from vehicle-animal collisions.<sup>7,8</sup> Also, fatalities resulting from falling off a ridden animal are classified differently and are not included in this study. From 1991 to 1998, an average of 88 fatalities per year were attributed to riding an animal, usually a horse. Including these numbers and the few cases of unknown fatalities possibly caused by anaphylactic reactions to animal stings<sup>27</sup> and motor vehicle accidents as a result of swerving to miss an animal on the highway, it is likely that 500 to 600 fatalities per year can be attributed to animal-human interactions, not including infections transmitted by animals.

**(Note: No fatalities of humans associated with coyotes!)**